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July 1902

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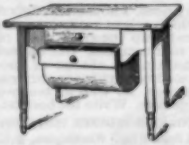

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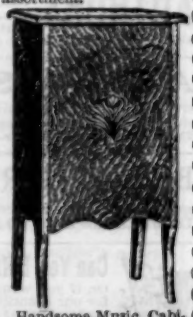

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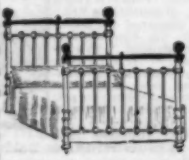

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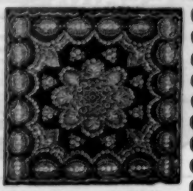

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The Jockey Who Went to Sleep.*

BY LOUIS WESLYN.

THE City Editor had declared in emphatic terms that there must be a change for the better. "What the *Daily Times* needs above all else," he had insisted, "is feature stuff — local feature stuff; mind you, it must be local. We are getting all the news, but there's lots of good feature material in this town that's going to waste." And he had wound up his council of war with a demand that every reporter on the paper exert himself to his utmost toward attaining the much desired end.

For six weeks following that memorable lecture by the "man

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of $200 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending February 26, 1902.

on the desk" the columns of the *Times* had surprised every one connected with the editorial department — the Managing Editor most of all, the latter dignitary even going so far as to send down a note to the local room expressing his satisfaction at the good feature work that was being done by the city staff and urging "the boys" to "keep it up."

But it was no easy task to keep it up. In an inland city of little more than a hundred thousand inhabitants it requires but a short time for a force of energetic newspaper workers to exhaust all subjects of interest aside from the regular news of the day. The *Times* reporters found at the end of six weeks that if anything in town worth writing about had been overlooked by them it must surely have been something beyond the reach of human vision.

Sanderson, especially, felt that he was at the end of his string, as he expressed it, and when the City Editor requested him to prepare a good column feature story for next Saturday's paper the little reporter's jaw dropped despairingly. Sandy — everybody called him "Sandy" — remarked to the Municipal Reporter that he "was up against it."

"Why don't you fake up something?" suggested the Municipal Reporter, who, being a writer of city politics, had no conscience.

"Can't," replied Sandy, mournfully. "The City Editor would be certain to catch me at it. And he said the other day that the first chap to write a fake story — or to write anything that he can't verify — will be jugged." And Sandy went despondingly about his business, leaving the Municipal Reporter to beat out another city hall scandal on his trusty typewriter.

The week was speeding along to a close and Sanderson, for the life of him, was unable to unearth his column feature story. He had searched every nook and corner of the city in the hope of hitting upon something that would furnish him with an available idea, but his search was in vain. All of this time, of course, he was pursuing his regular routine duties, the feature work being of a special nature. Somehow his brain, usually so active, seemed to be at a standstill and refused absolutely to help him out of his predicament. Every one who belongs to the great army of newspaper workers will readily understand and appreciate Sanderson's

situation, for there comes a time — many times, perhaps — in every writer's experience when his tired-out mental machinery imitates the balky horse.

Friday afternoon the City Editor said to Sanderson, in his exasperatingly nonchalant manner: "Turn in that feature story of yours this evening, Sandy."

"Yes, sir," said Sandy.

"It will run fully a column, of course, Sandy?" said the City Editor.

"Oh, fully a column," said Sandy.

And then Sandy went back to his desk and mussed his shaggy brown hair about in all directions with one hand while he bit the nails of the other hand down to the quick. "What in the name of all the green-eyed devils am I to do?" he groaned to himself.

Then, of a sudden, his loafing brain got up and shook itself (as it were) and started a-going again. For Sandy's desperate eye, travelling on a swift, restless journey about the room, had chanced to alight upon a big photograph leaning against a drawer of the Sporting Editor's desk — a photograph of the celebrated race horse "Billy Boy."

Quick as a flash of lightning Sandy remembered something, and the recollection was as a life preserver to a drowning man. He remembered the story of "The Jockey Who Went to Sleep," to quote the headline that appeared over his article in the *Times* on the following day. The story had been told him several years before by the well-known race horse trainer Sam Lesterbrook, of Nashville, and Sandy had never published it on account of a promise he had given — a promise to wait until the jockey in question (an intimate friend of the trainer), had retired from the turf, before making the matter public property.

Now behold how wonderful are the workings of the human brain! The photograph of the race horse had suggested to Sandy's mind the once-familiar name of Sam Lesterbrook, and the name of Sam Lesterbrook had brought back to him the long-forgotten story of "The Jockey Who Went to Sleep."

Sandy sat up in his chair very suddenly. "Say, Charlie!" he called across the room to the Sporting Editor, "what's become of the jockey Davy Wingfield?"

"Dead," said the Sporting Editor. "Died at the Oakland meet in California last winter."

"Good!" cried Sandy, with enthusiasm.

"What?" roared the Sporting Editor.

"I mean — I mean that's too bad," said Sandy.

But he didn't look as if he meant it. His typewriter was ready for business in the twinkling of a second. A feature story at last! And a good one too! There was no reason now why that incident of sporting life, as related by Sam Lesterbrook, should not be given publicity. The jockey was dead — beyond all human criticism — and the printing of the story couldn't injure him now.

And then there descended a wet blanket in the form of a discomforting thought. The City Editor had insisted that every feature story turned in by his staff must be of local interest entirely. However, Sandy's enthusiasm was roused to the proper reportorial pitch by this time, and when a reporter possessing the true newspaper instinct has a good story to tell he will find a way to tell it every time, no matter what obstacles thrust themselves in the way.

"I'll just stretch a point and localize the thing," muttered Sandy. And without more ado he bent himself to his job and was soon tapping out his afterward famous story of the jockey who, being worn out on account of sitting awake for two nights by the bedside of his sick sweetheart, went to sleep while riding in a ten-thousand-dollar event at Lexington and didn't wake up until the race was lost. Sandy "localized the thing" in a manner familiar to all reporters — by beginning his story in this way: "Sam Lesterbrook, the prominent race horse trainer, was in this city yesterday on his way East and, in conversation with a *Times* reporter, told a remarkable story, etc., etc., etc."

Of course Sandy was guilty of telling a lie when he wrote that introductory paragraph — lie No. 1. The present scribe doesn't attempt to defend Sandy for telling that lie, nor for those he told later on, but will say this much for him — that, at least, that first one seemed a harmless falsehood, from Sandy's standpoint, and was quite necessary in order to print the story.

The *Times* had never published before — and, I'm sure, has never published since — a better special article than that one

about "The Jockey Who Went to Sleep." It was such an unusual story, and Sandy had written it so well, that it attracted more than passing attention everywhere. A Cincinnati paper copied it the very following day on its sporting page, and before the month had expired many of the big dailies from New York to San Francisco had followed suit. The City Editor, true to his everlasting policy, had nothing to say by way of approval, but Sandy knew that he was pleased, nevertheless. Sandy's associates on the city staff, with one exception, were not backward, however, in complimenting him upon his successful effort.

The exception was the Sporting Editor. "Why in thunder," said that worthy, with ill-humor, "didn't you tell me that Sam Lesterbrook was in town, Sandy? I wanted to get some information from him about 'Billy Boy.'"

"Oh," said Sandy, "I was so absorbed in my story that I forgot to mention the matter to you, Charlie."

Which was lie No. 2.

Then came the evening of April fifth — Sandy always remembered the date. He was preparing to leave the office, the day's work being finished (the *Times* is an afternoon paper), when he received word that the City Editor wished to see him. He hurried to the City Editor's room and found his chief in consultation with two men — strangers to Sandy. Somehow, without knowing why, Sandy felt uneasy.

"Ah — Sanderson," began the City Editor, gazing sharply at the little reporter through his nose glasses, "where did you get that story of yours about the jockey who went to sleep?"

Sandy's uneasiness increased, but he made up his mind to stand his ground. "Why, I got it from the horse trainer, Sam Lesterbrook," he answered, "just as I explained at the beginning of the article."

"You would be willing to swear to that?" the City Editor inquired, in a tone of voice that plainly implied doubt.

"Willing to swear that Sam Lesterbrook told me the story? Yes, sir, I would take my solemn oath on it," said Sandy, stoutly, relieved at the turn the conversation had taken.

But he wasn't out of hot water yet, for the City Editor, picking up his file of *Times* back-numbers, next demanded:

"And you wrote the story on the second day of March?"

"I did," said Sandy. He was conscious that the eyes of the two visitors were scrutinizing him closely and realized that he was being examined for their benefit.

The City Editor had by this time come across the paper he wanted — a copy of the *Times* of March third — and, removing it from its place on the file, handed it to one of the men.

"There's the article on the fourth page," he said. Then, turning to Sandy, he continued: "If you had an interview with Sam Lesterbrook on March second — the day before that story was printed — there's no doubt, of course, that Sam Lesterbrook was in the city on March second?"

Sandy had felt it coming and was prepared for it. He hadn't the least idea in the world what the silent visitors had to do with the matter, but he did know one thing for a certainty — that he couldn't afford to lose his job on the *Times*.

"Of course there can be no doubt of it," he replied, without a blush.

And that was lie No. 3.

The City Editor turned to the two callers. "Is there anything that you would like to ask him, gentlemen?" he inquired.

The man who held the paper, and who had been scanning the article in question, shook his head. "No," he said. "This knocks our case flat."

"Very well. Thanks, Sanderson; that'll be about all"; and there was actually a kindly look in the City Editor's eyes.

Sandy experienced a pang of remorse. "He is thinking what a trustworthy fellow I am," he said to himself.

As the reporter left the room he overheard the City Editor's query, "Are you satisfied, gentlemen?" and the answer of one of the men, "Yes, we're satisfied that we were on the wrong track, confound it!"

Sandy was sorely puzzled. What were the two strangers trying to "get at," anyway? He hoped that the City Editor would give him some explanation of the incident, but was doomed to disappointment, for the City Editor would vouchsafe no information; in fact he never even mentioned the thing again.

But Sandy didn't have to wait long for enlightenment. Judge

of his state of mind when, three days later, he read the following telegraph news item in the *Times:*

> NASHVILLE, TENN., April 8. The mystery surrounding the murder of the gambler Philip Davies is growing deeper. The two detectives who are working upon the case returned to this city from their Northern trip last night and one of them admitted to a newspaper man that the clew upon which they have been working for a month has proven entirely groundless. While the detective refused to mention any name, it is understood that a well known horse trainer was suspected of the crime. It will be remembered that the murder occurred in this city early in the morning of March second. It now transpires that the man who was believed to be the murderer was in another city, over four hundred miles away, on the day of the tragedy, and that it was impossible that he could have had anything to do with the killing of Davies. There is no doubt whatever that the horse trainer was in another city, as he chanced to be interviewed while there by a newspaper reporter to whom he related an interesting reminiscence of the turf that has since been copied far and wide in the newspapers throughout America.

Poor Sandy!

"That's what comes of trifling with the truth," he groaned. "If Sam Lesterbrook did kill that man I am his accomplice in crime, for those lies of mine are shielding him from justice."

And to make matters worse he remembered that the horse trainer was a man of fiery temper — a man who was always ready to fight if he believed himself imposed upon.

For many days Sandy's mind was a whirlpool of troubled thought. But the real mental agony came with the telegraphed news from Nashville that a stable man named Brodie had been arrested on the charge of shooting the gambler Davies. Sandy pulled at his disordered hair in earnest now and bit his poor nails until it was painful for him to turn out copy on his typewriter. What course should he pursue? He rolled the question about in his unhappy head until it became as a nightmare to him. Should he come out boldly and honestly with the truth about that feature story and thus place his old acquaintance, Sam Lesterbrook, in prison while the stable man went free? But what if, after all, Sam Lesterbrook were innocent? It would be a deplorable blunder to get an innocent man into such terrible trouble. Still, there was the stable man — what about *him?* He might be the innocent one, himself, in which case it would be outrageous to allow him to suffer for the deed of another.

Would it do anybody any good to tell the truth about that feature story? Would it do anybody any harm? Yes, it was

bound to do somebody harm, no matter what bearing it might have on the murder case. It would do Sandy harm. For Sandy would get "jugged," sure as fate. And to get jugged just at this time would be awfully inconvenient for Sandy. For Sandy was hard up.

Well, Sandy lived through a week of this sort of thing and then he ran across something that eased his mind considerably. It was another news item from Nashville stating that the stable man, Brodie, had been released, as there was not sufficient evidence to hold him for trial. And the item concluded with these words: "From present appearances the Davies murder will be numbered among the unsolved mysteries in Nashville criminal history. The police acknowledge they are utterly at sea in regard to the case. They say that, so far as they are able to sift the matter, there are just two men who could have had any reason for killing Davies, who was known as the most good-humored of men, despite his questionable profession. One of these two men suspected by the police (the man just released) has proof that he and the gambler recently made up their quarrel of long standing and were the best of friends at the time of the tragedy. The other man who was under suspicion furnishes an impregnable alibi."

The knowledge that the fate of the stable man was not hanging upon Sandy's shoulders was at least of some comfort to the reporter. Still he could not shake off the tremendous responsibility that insisted upon taking a front seat among his thoughts. The thing that distressed him most was this question, which presented itself to him a hundred times a day: If Sam Lesterbrook was innocent of that crime, why on earth should he take advantage of the printed misstatement in the *Times* concerning his whereabouts on the day of the murder? That was what stumped Sandy.

Continual worry over the matter began to bring dire results as the weeks went by. Sandy forgot things — things that the City Editor desired that he should remember, too. And Sandy's copy began to be crowded with frightful grammatical blunders. And Sandy's articles began to be miserably weak and uninteresting. It soon became noticeable that the City Editor was casting occasional glances of disapproval at Sandy through his nose-glasses.

And then a little piece of gossip started tip-toeing about the local room. Sandy was about to be jugged unless his work showed decided improvement.

Sandy sat gloomily at his desk late one afternoon in May, staring at the blank sheet of paper in his typewriter. Down in the press rooms the last edition of the paper was being noisily turned out into the world, and the whole building was vibrating from the busy action of the great machines. Most of the local staff had gone home, but here and there a reporter sat at his typewriter preparing some "left-over copy" for the next day's paper. Sandy was in despair. He had been asked by the City Editor to write another feature story, and he was discerning enough to realize that his future, so far as the *Times* was concerned, depended largely upon the manner in which he fulfilled the "detail."

He had sat silently in the same position for nearly half an hour, staring at that blank paper. At last with a quick, nervous movement, he pushed the typewriter away from him. "No use! no use!" he muttered, starting to his feet. "I can't write. It's all up with me. I'll go and tell the chief the whole wretched truth — make a clean breast of it. What's Sam Lesterbrook to me, anyhow? I'll just —"

But at this point he sat down again very suddenly. For who should walk into the local room at that moment but Sam Lesterbrook himself!

The horse trainer was grayer and more wrinkled than when Sandy had last seen him, at a race meeting in Terre Haute, Ind., but there was no mistaking that clear blue eye and erect carriage of the head. He gave one sweeping look over the room and then walked straight down through the aisle formed by reporters' desks to where Sandy was sitting.

The newcomer, without a word, extended his hand. Sandy grasped it hesitatingly. Then Lesterbook drew up a chair and sat down beside the reporter.

"Sandy," he said, and there was a twinkle in the bright blue eye, "I've journeyed up here from New Orleans just to see you — and to thank you."

The man's nerve paralyzed Sandy. Lesterbrook drew from his vest pocket two big black cigars, handed Sandy one, lighted the

other himself, and puffed a great cloud of smoke toward the ceiling.

"Sandy," he began again, lowering his voice so that none of the other reporters could hear his words, "you're the most magnificent liar in the United States and I admire you immensely. You and your stupendous prevarications have done me an inestimable service. There was every reason in the world for the police to suspect me of shooting that fellow Davies. Although, as Heaven is my witness, Sandy, I am as innocent of that crime as you are yourself."

As the horse trainer uttered these words he became as solemn and sober as a judge. Sandy felt that the statement rang true, and his heart gave a big thump of thankfulness.

"I never liked Davies — there's no denying that," went on Lesterbrook, between puffs at his cigar. "I always thought that his good-nature was a sham and that he was in reality a humbug and a rascal. I had some words with him once and, in the presence of witnesses, foolishly lost my temper and told him to keep out of my way or I'd shoot him on sight. Now, listen, Sandy, I was in Nashville on the morning of that murder. Nobody knew I was in town but my room-mate, for I was sick in bed. When that shooting scrape occurred I knew in a minute that I would be suspected. I laid low. Then my attention was called to that story of yours which was going the rounds of the newspapers — that story about the jockey who went to sleep, in which you stated — a trick of your trade, I suppose — that I was in this city on the second of March. Sandy," and the horse trainer paused long enough to send another cloud of tobacco smoke on a journey to the ceiling, "that story was my salvation. Circumstantial evidence against me was so great that, if it hadn't been for that yarn of yours, there was absolutely nothing that could have saved me. Of course, my room-mate, Ben Hollingsworth, would have sworn that I was sick in bed throughout the day, but Ben is known to be such a life-long friend of mine that everybody would have thought he was lying. Besides, Ben's a notorious liar, anyway. Yes, it was your yarn, Sandy, that saved me. It was a faultless alibi and the police didn't dare arrest me. The whole business has blown over now and I've taken advantage of the first opportunity to come up here and see you in person and tell you the truth about the

thing, for I didn't want you to think that I had anything to do with the killing of that poor chap."

Sandy drew in such an enormous breath of relief that there was little fresh air left in the room when he had finished. He opened his mouth to give voice to his sentiments, but Lesterbrook waved him aside.

"Sandy," said the horse trainer, "last week I won five thousand dollars down at New Orleans on Ellington's three-year-old, 'Billy Boy.' By George! Sandy, that horse is a wonder. Well, if it hadn't been for you, I couldn't have won the money, for it's ten to one I'd have been in jail. Now, Sandy, I know you're hard up. A newspaper man that I met on the train — friend of yours — told me so. Half that five thousand is yours by rights, Sandy — and there it is."

And he placed on Sandy's desk a bulky roll of crisp greenbacks.

A curious gurgle came from Sandy's throat.

"And now," said the horse trainer, slapping Sandy on the back, "come downstairs and have a glass of beer and a sandwich, and I'll tell you another story."

Auxons.*

BY JULIA TRUITT BISHOP.

RICHARD FANNING threw down the morning paper and lay out at length on the silk-draped lounge. His hands were clasped back of his head. He was staring at the ceiling with a look of unutterable boredom.

The new valet moved a chair slightly and cleared his throat discreetly. He was but a new valet, and doubtless he felt that to look at that face just now was like listening at a keyhole.

"Don't knock the furniture about, if you please, Edouard," suggested Fanning, not turning his eyes from the ceiling. "Upon my honor, I believe my nerves are going."

"Has Monsieur any orders?" asked the new valet softly. It was the softness of his tones that had led Fanning to engage him. His former valet had possessed a hoarse croak that made excellent service of none effect. Of what value was money if one could not buy pleasing voice as well as ready hand?

"Oh, no orders," said Fanning with the same unchanging stare. "I am tired, Edouard — deadly tired. If I knew what to do, I give you my word I'd do it."

Edouard stood respectfully near, looking down.

"Why, for instance, does not Monsieur travel?" he asked with quiet suggestion.

A tired smile curled one corner of Fanning's mouth.

"Because, for instance, my good Edouard," he replied, "I have travelled until I am more tired of that than of anything else.

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of $100 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending February 26, 1902.

Talk of travel to a man that knows Port Said by heart, and could find his way blindfold about Teheran! Try something else, man."

Edouard laid his hand on a chair-back.

"But while Monsieur has travelled, he has, perchance, never seen Auxons," he suggested again.

"Auxons? what is that?" asked Fanning, turning his eyes for a moment toward the face of the quiet Edouard.

"It is but a little town, Monsieur — a little town in the mountains of my country," Edouard hastened to assure him; "but it is very old, and is not without interest."

Then for the first time Fanning laughed.

"Now, why should you imagine," he said, "that I have any desire to see every little old garlic-smelling French town on the map — or *not* on it? Give me my coat, Edouard — and don't be an idiot."

Receiving his coat, and being duly brushed, he went down to his club, from whose almost empty windows he stared vacantly at the street outside and was consumed with weariness. No one was there whom he cared to meet, and he avoided the smiling old club Nestor with a haste that was almost rudeness. He was on the point of leaving when a certain Mr. Clermont strolled in and met him with evident pleasure. Mr. Clermont had brought European letters of introduction to the club three days ago.

"Well met!" cried Mr. Clermont. "I have wished to see you to say good-bye, as it may be that I shall leave New York for my own land to-morrow. And when shall I see you in Paris?"

"I do not think of going soon," said Fanning, with a weary smile that was scarcely at the trouble to smile at all. "You see, I have visited Paris so many times —"

"Ah, but have you seen Auxons?" asked Mr. Clermont with enthusiasm. "Depend upon it, my friend, it is worth the visit to France merely to see Auxons."

A flash of interest lit Fanning's eyes. Twice within an hour, this place of which he had never heard before had been mentioned by men of very different stations in life. He would have asked further, but at that moment Mr. Clermont was called away, and he did not see him again.

The unutterable dulness of the club drove him out, and in his

wanderings he passed a public library, hesitated and turned back. A dark young man who seemed to be a stranger went up the marble steps after him. Fanning chose a book and sat down. Sometimes a book might be found that was fairly endurable.

A while later he was aroused by a voice at his side.

"Pardon, Monsieur," the dark young man was saying in French, "but will you assist me in finding if there is a paper here, published in the little town of Auxons?"

For a moment Fanning was dumb with amazement. Then he courteously arose and began the search. But there was no such paper, as he presently communicated to the stranger.

"Ah," said the young man with a look of disappointment; "doubtless that is because Auxons is not one of the large cities. You have, by chance, seen it, Monsieur? True, it is very small, but it is very old, and not without interest, Monsieur."

The repetition of Edouard's words gave Fanning a sudden, uneasy sense that all this had happened long ago, and that he knew what was going to happen next. What did happen next was that the young man disappeared with a murmur of thanks, and that he restored the book to its place on the shelves.

"Why should I?" he kept asking scornfully of the Self that was already resolving upon a certain thing; and the Self replied, "Why not?"

And perhaps it was because there was no reason for doing it that he did it.

"Edouard," he said, half an hour later, "do you know how to reach this Auxons of which you speak?"

"Assuredly, Monsieur," said Edouard, after the slightest pause.

"Then we will start to-morrow," said Fanning. "There's money — take it, and manage the trip, and spare me the worries."

Edouard did not even raise his eyes. There were times when Edouard was very impassive.

"Monsieur will find everything ready," he said very quietly.

. . . . . .

A little branch of the Loire tumbled noisily down a gorge; a little old, old village held a scanty foothold on the slanting edge of it. Higher up on the slope, with the torrent a hundred feet down and the cliff a thousand feet up, clung the half-ruined château.

Fanning stood beneath the château and looked up and looked down.

"And this is Auxons!" he said. There was a note of contempt in his voice. He had come such a way — to see this!

"Monsieur is looking upon an old town," said Edouard in the very quiet tones Fanning had liked. "Its foundations were laid by the Gauls — it was old in the days of Cæsar, Monsieur. The château has sheltered Clovis and Charlemagne, and has been the abode of one family since before their day."

"Judging from its looks, they have fallen upon evil times," said Monsieur indifferently.

"It would seem so, Monsieur," said Edouard. "Does Monsieur wish that I tell the château's story in the château itself? One must be careful of the steps — see how the stones fall away! This is the chapel, Monsieur — newer than the remainder of the château, and yet very old — so old that it, too, falls to decay."

They stood in the ruined chapel, its walls crumbling, its roof sagging. At the end was a great stained-glass window, almost entire, but the ivy had grown over it on the outside so that most of the light was shut off. The old chapel would have been in darkness, but that once in a while, the leaves, stirred by the wind, parted and let a dull glow through, as though it shone from the heart of an opal.

After a little, Fanning saw that the dark masses on the floor were heaps of stones fallen from the thick walls. After a little more he saw that the dark something beneath the winking glow of the great window was a tomb, with a marble slab closing it.

Edouard stood near him, very quiet.

"It is not a pleasant story, that of the château," he said, when Fanning had turned his eyes upon him and waited for him to speak. "It was, as I told Monsieur, a very old family — very old and very noble. The men have been great men always — great statesmen, great generals, what you will; — and the time was when they helped kings with their money. Once their lands swept down that valley yonder, and as far as the eye could see in three directions from this hill-top. But the Revolution took away much, Monsieur, and it was only because Auxons was so far away and hidden that it left them even the château."

Monsieur was inclined to find the story a little dull. He rested one foot on a heap of stones and lit a cigar, encircling the flame of the match with his hands. The yellow light, striking up into his face, showed how dull he found the story.

"For a hundred years, Monsieur, they have been poor," Edouard went on, after the match had died out. "Some of them, one may suppose, died broken-hearted; but at last there was left only a broken old man, with his grandchildren. One of these was a girl."

For a single moment Edouard paused again; then the low, inflexible voice went on:

"One of them was a girl, and she was in a convent, being educated. But at last the fortunes fell so low that she must be brought home; and then her brothers, grown desperate, left her with the old man and sold themselves as mercenaries to whatever government would buy."

"Is this a continued story, Edouard?" asked Monsieur. "Because if it is, I will take the remainder of it at that little hole-in-the-wall you were pleased to call an inn."

"Monsieur will find that it is near the end," said Edouard with a voice that was like velvet. "Monsieur has but to note that, the brothers being gone away, the old man died; and that the girl, being left penniless, was glad to take a position with an English family as governess. Monsieur has but to remember, also, that she was just out of a convent, with the face of a Madonna and the eyes of an infant."

Monsieur spent some silent moments remembering this statement. During these moments the point of fire on the end of his cigar died out.

"Did you mention the name of this — this family, Edouard?" he asked carelessly. It was a carelessness that was somewhat marred by a certain thickness of utterance, as of a dry tongue.

A light sound at the other end of the chapel drew his eyes. He saw two men moving slowly up through the shadows.

"The girl," said Edouard, "was Mademoiselle Adrienne Louise de la Vivaseur. Monsieur will, perhaps, be kind enough to reflect if he has ever heard such a name."

Monsieur had, apparently, not heard such a name. There was

silence. The ivy leaves parted and shot down a crimson ray upon the tomb.

"Monsieur finds the story more interesting?" asked Edouard of the velvet voice. "Monsieur will remember that she was the daughter of kings and nobles, and that blood of the Crusaders ran in her veins. Yet her brothers found her one morning lying beside that tomb, dead, with a dead babe in her arms."

The two shadowy figures moved up a step nearer, but Monsieur did not heed them. He was staring as if fascinated at the tomb with the spot of crimson dancing upon it.

There was silence so deep and so long that it might have lasted for years.

When Monsieur moved, it was toward the tomb. The spot of red wavered and trembled upon a carved lettering.

"To One Forgotten," he read.

He still had command of himself.

"They placed that above her? Yet she is not forgotten," he said to Edouard.

"Monsieur takes that for her tomb?" asked Edouard, softly. "But indeed, she was not buried there. She lay down beside it to die, but the tomb was not for her. It is reserved, Monsieur, for the man who played with the little convent girl, and sent her home to die."

To eyes accustomed to the shadows, it could be seen that Monsieur's face had whitened. Yet he spoke lightly. He even smiled.

"'To One Forgotten,'" he repeated, looking Edouard in the face. "But he is not forgotten. Perhaps he is not even dead."

"Monsieur," said Edouard, softly, "he is both!"

Edouard had stooped and touched something at his feet, and the slab of marble was mysteriously lifted and swung away. Thick darkness lay within.

Monsieur was aware that the two shadows had closed up, and were on either hand. He turned his eyes from one to the other of them.

Clermont, of the club, and the dark young stranger of the library.

A sense came upon him that the club and the library were

worlds of space and thousands of years away — that the only realities were these three dark figures and the tomb by whose cold side the daughter of kings and Crusaders had lain down to die.

— It could not be more cold within than it had been without.

— And yet he had not meant —

"I see," he said, wearily, at the end of that long pause. "No doubt you would prefer that I should do this thing voluntarily, Monsieur de la Vivaseur?"

"We should greatly prefer it, Monsieur," said that one who had lately been Edouard.

Monsieur stepped into the tomb and sat down.

"You won't object to my smoking?" he asked, taking out a fresh cigar and a match. "It will shorten things, maybe."

Monsieur de la Vivaseur's face was set.

"Adieu, Monsieur," he said, giving another touch to that mysterious something on the floor.

There was the glow of a cigar in the darkness as the stone swung back and settled into its place.

At the farther end of the chapel a door opened, and a bent figure found its way among the stones.

"Have you brought the cement, Jean?" asked Monsieur de la Vivaseur.

"It is here, Your Grace," said the old man.

"Seal up the tomb — it has been opened for the last time," saitl Monseigneur; and the three went out, without looking back.

The old man listened for a furtive moment, with his ear at the edge of the marble slab. Silence.

Then he took the cement and sealed up every crevice, and went his way.

The red glow from the window leaped from the tomb to the floor, and crept along it, over the fallen stones, and up the wall, as though it were eager to get away. Down among the shadows lay the dim gray shape given over to the use of One Forgotten.

Lights Out! *

BY FREDERIC LAURENCE DAVIS.

CTING under the special orders, from which the following is an extract, issued by the commander of the Potomac Flotilla to his various captains and lieutenants, the U. S. S. *Westport* lay, as if becalmed, in the channel of the Potomac River, not far from Piney Point, on Sunday night, the 26th of March, 1864:

> At night, bells are not to be struck, nor whistles blown, nor other noise made which will indicate a vessel's position, nor are lights to be shown while running, or when at anchor, except as signals in cases of emergency.

The vessel's guns were loaded, her small arms charged and stacked, the boarding nettings securely fastened and the watch on deck paced with measured tread their silent vigil, armed with cutlass and loaded gun. As the night was exceedingly dark, the watch was doubled, although the lookouts might have been trebled or quadrupled and their eyes could not have seen a ship's beam away. The alert engineer, with hand on the lever, stood ready to "go ahead fast" at the jingling of his bell, and the officers and crew slept without removing their boots.

Able Seaman Bill Loring, of the port watch, stopped his walk long enough to shift his musket from his right to his left shoulder and then resumed his tread, beating his freed hand against his leg to keep up his circulation.

"Dang it," he muttered (Bill was a Maine farmer before he took to sailoring), "it's all-fired cold. That hand feels like it ain't no hand 'tall." Biff, biff, and he pounded himself vigorously as he paced the deck.

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"Dang it," — again Bill ripped out his dreadful oath, — "I wish they wouldn't stop striking the bell every half-hour, jest because it's night. Dang it, that's the only time a fellow wants to hear it. Here I am frozen stiff and don't know whether my trick is nigh over or not, and it's too danged dark to see my watch."

It was indeed a dark night, and the blackness seemed all the more intense to Able Seaman Bill Loring because not the faintest streak of light could be seen on shipboard, every hatchway, grating and doorway on the deck from which light could possibly emerge being covered with heavy tarpaulins.

Of late the rebels on the Virginia side, and the quasi-loyalists on the Maryland side, of the Potomac, had been suspiciously active, and blockade runners were trying by all manner of means to slip through the cordon of ships that protected the capital from invasion by its water gateway and harassed the enemy in his communication with his friends on the "Union" shore. In order to ensure more efficient service, the fleet detailed to protect these waters had to meet the enemy with equal alertness and cunning.

The special order quoted at the beginning was issued for this purpose, and Able Seaman Bill Loring only voiced the sentiments of the entire crew when he complained, though inaudibly and only partially, of the extra precautions taken on board the ship. The men were willing to fight all day, they said, but they did not want to do double watch at night, and it is no wonder that Able Seaman Bill Loring cursed in his own mild Maine style and then leaned his elbow on the ship's rail to get a moment's rest. It was only for a moment — it was really too cold to go to sleep — but still, when Bill opened his eyes, it was with the guilty feeling of having slept at his post; not a very great crime, perhaps, if you are not found out.

What's that! Some one coming? Bill drew himself to attention. No, false alarm; there is not a sound on shipboard, but yet there is some noise somewhere. Bill rubbed his eyes to make sure of being awake, and then, making a receiver of his hand, he placed it to his ear and craned his head over the bulwark. Yes, there is a noise, a positive sound, growing clearer and sharper, and it is the swish of a cutwater coming with winged speed from the north, and then, suddenly, like the bursting of a bomb, there

spreads before him the indistinct, hazy white of a sail. It seemed to be coming right at him, and yet there was light neither above nor below it, but like a spectre or a nightmare on it came. Instinctively Bill Loring raised his musket to his shoulder and fired. The crack of his gun reverberating throughout the ship came simultaneously with the crash of the collision, of breaking timber and the fall of a heavy sail carrying down with it the splintered mast.

The sound of the watchman's rattle now aroused the officers and crew, who repaired at once to quarters, while bright lights flashed as if by magic from all parts of the deck.

The boatswain, with lantern in hand, was soon at Loring's side hailing with lusty lungs the whitish mass rapidly falling off on the port quarter.

"Ahoy there!" he cried. "Show a light or we'll sink yer."

There was no reply from the darkness, but down there on the other side of the whitish matter could be seen a moving light, by which the straining eyes of the men on board the man-of-war could now faintly descry the object that had launched itself against the side of their vessel. A small sloop of the coaster kind, a dismasted wreck, was drifting astern, already beyond the reach of grappling irons, and despite the heavy kedge that her wreckage made, would soon be entirely lost to sight. The broken mast was lying over her side, causing a heavy list to port; the mainsail, hanging like the useless wing of a wounded bird, covered nearly half the deck and mingled in a bellying mass with the jibs, also brought down with the fall of the mast and the demolition of the bowsprit. The lantern on the disabled sloop moved towards the bow, fluttered around for a moment while its bearer inspected the damage to his craft, and then wiggled back to the stern.

Again the hoarse voice from the man-of-war sang out its challenge, while the creaking of porthole hinges sounded an ominous warning. The lantern was deposited on the deck of the sloop and a man's voice responded:

"Sloop *Eeler*, f'um St. Mary's; Cap'n Thomas Tomlin Thompson, lookin' fo' er cyargo. Whut vessel is thet?"

"United States man-of-war *Westport*. Lay to; we'll send a boat aboard."

"Aye, suh, send her quick, weah sinkin'," and Captain Thomas Tomlin Thompson, who had been awakened from his sleep by the collision, disappeared down the companionway, unseen by those on the other vessel.

As he stepped into the cabin the skipper was greeted by the hasty voice of an excited man, who was trying to clothe himself in the dark and strike a match at the same time. The hairy fist of Captain Tom was laid warningly on the other's arm.

"Not on yo' life," he said. "Mistah, theah ain't no time to dress, an' er match ain't necessa'y. Th' time has come when you got to swim. Kin you?"

"Yes, yes, suhtainly; but what's the mattah?"

"Run plum into er mannerwah. Right in our co'se an' hed no lights out. Hit was mah watch off, suh, an' Jim — well, he must abeen asleep at th' wheel; but th' mischief's done an' th' devil's to pay. Er boat is comin' abo'de. Git out, man, or youah er goner. Don't stop fo' cloze, youah bettah off 'thout 'em. Heah, take this —" and the Captain jerked from the rafters above his head a cork jacket, which he hastily strapped around the half-clad man.

"Th' Firginyah sho' lies ovah thet erway, an' th' tide'll carry you jist erbout to th' mouth of th' Yocomico. Git into Kinsale an' ask fo' Sterrett. He'll fix you all right," and pushing the now thoroughly awakened passenger up the companionway ahead of him, the captain regained the deck, so placing himself as to shield the other from possible sight of those aboard or coming from the man-of-war.

The passenger with the cork jacket dropped over the side of the sloop, holding tight to the guide line. "B–b–r–r–r–r, b–r–r–r–r, its co–o–o–ld," rattled through his shivering teeth.

Captain Thompson leaned cautiously over the guard-rail. "You'd bettah not wait," he said. Without a word the man in the water let go the rope, shoved himself free of the sloop and struck out for the Virginia shore.

Hardly had his head been engulfed in total darkness when the boat from the *Westport* rounded to and hooked on to the very place that the stranger had occupied for a few shivering seconds, and an officer, followed closely by two men, all heavily armed, sprang

upon the deck. The flash of the lantern carried by one of them revealed more strongly than the feeble flame of that by the cabin window the small and inoffensive group confronting the boarders. One was a white man, more of a countryman than sailor in appearance, and the other a negro, as nondescript as his captain. Neither seemed excited by the situation and both stood leaning against the tiller while the officer and his men were clambering over the side. Captain Thompson raised his hand and respectfully saluted the young officer, who pointed a pistol at his head and demanded to know if he were the captain of the sloop.

"Yes, suh," he answered.

"Who are you?"

"Captain Thomas Tomlin Thompson, suh, an' heah's mah pass," saying which he handed a soiled and crumpled bit of cardboard to the ensign, who put it into his pocket without deigning to glance at it.

"Do you know the regulations?" the ensign demanded sharply.

"Nevah studied 'em, suh."

"You know you had no lights."

"Which remark might be applied to yo' own vessel, suh."

"How many men have you on board?" demanded the officer, paying no heed to the captain's retort.

"One."

"One? Why I *see* two."

"Of co'se, if you include th' nigger."

"Anybody else on board?"

The captain negatively shook his head.

The officer turned to his men. "Search the cabin," he commanded, and the two quickly jumped below, carrying the lantern. They soon returned, and reported a thorough search, but no one present, "and if there is, he won't live long, 'cause the water's making fast, and she'll be down in half an hour."

"Then," rejoined the officer, "we'll put off to the ship. Each of you collar one of these fellows and blow his brains out if he doesn't walk chalk. If there's any one else aboard, he'll have to drown or—" and he peered off into the darkness—"have a damned good swim for shore."

He then turned to step into his boat, but his foot caught in a

mesh of rope, and he stooped to extricate himself. He found himself entangled in the flag halyards, and at his foot was the sloop's burgee, white with blue capital letters, spelling its name *Eeler*. A sailor's sheath knife quickly parted the burgee from its ropes, and the officer carried it with him to his ship.

As Captain Thomas Tomlin Thompson and his crew of one reached the deck of the man-of-war, handcuffs were placed upon them and they were unceremoniously shoved into the "brig" to await a hearing in the morning. Despite the narrowness of their quarters they slept like dead men, and only awakened in the morning when ordered to get up and appear before the Captain.

As the two prisoners were marshalled before the commander of the vessel, Captain Thompson raised his manacled hands to salute and knocked his slouch hat to the floor, and stood upon it during the examination which occurred. The negro stood with bowed head, as if awaiting the hangman's noose, but his stolid black face showed no sign of fear. Thompson's face wore its perennial smile of good humor and love for mankind. No situation ever daunted him, and no emotion, save of good nature, was ever seen on his weathered countenance. His grizzled hair and whiskers, his clear blue eye, looking always at you in confidence and friendship, gave him not only a venerable aspect, but the appearance of one about to say something pleasant or to listen to a funny story. That he was not unknown to the Captain was evidenced by the latter's greeting.

"Why, it's Captain Tommy-Tommy," he exclaimed, as he wheeled around on his pivot chair and surveyed the culprits, standing between two armed marines, "and Black Jim. Why, I thought we had caught two desperadoes," and he shoved his spectacles down lower on the bridge of his nose in order to take a sharp look at them.

The Captain was a genial man and kindly disposed officer. He had an enviable record for efficient service in the work of the flotilla, but his enemies — those not in his clique in the Navy Department — were wont to criticise him severely for what they termed his leniency towards those captured in running the blockade. His own opinion was that it was better to have a friend running the blockade than an enemy, and he seldom treated a prisoner harshly unless the guilt was so flagrant that it could not

possibly have been mistaken. In this instance he had been informed that blockade runners had been captured while trying to get through without lights. There was no contraband found on the sloop, but, despite the fact that the skipper carried a pass from the flotilla commander, the offence of running without lights was too grave to be taken as anything than illicit trading. So when he turned and discovered the identity of his prisoners he was much surprised.

Captain Tommy-Tommy bowed at the recognition, and his blue eyes twinkled merrily, but he said nothing.

"Thompson," said the Captain, assuming a sudden severity and looking the other squarely in the face, "you are charged with running the blockade, with running without lights, and with running without a pass. What have you to say?"

"Nothin', Cap'n, nothin'."

"Nothing, Thompson! Do you answer 'Nothing' to three serious charges such as those? In a word, are you guilty or not guilty?"

"I would say, Cap'n, guilty with extenooatin' suhcumstances."

"What are the extenuating circumstances?"

"Takin' up th' charges in th' ordah mentioned, I would say I was sailin' free, but mah pass gives me thet license. I would also say that mah lights was out, but thet was th' fault of another, but as I was th' skipper, of co'se I'se ter blame, on'y I was ersleep when th' collision tuk place, an' then of co'se, hit was too late to put up th' signals. You see, hit was mah watch off, an' I reckon Jim must heve gone ter sleep at th' tiller, an' th' lights must heve gone out fo' want of ile; the cans *was* purty shy of bait when we left Alexandr'a."

"Alexandria! What were you doing at Alexandria?"

"Dumpin' them refugees whut I was impressed by th' commandah to take No'th."

"You were ordered to take them to the Navy Yard at Washington, and turn them over to the authorities there."

"Exactly, Cap'n; but th' river was froze erbove Hunter's P'int, an' I tuhned 'em ovah to th' depot quahtermarster at Alexandr'a, an' heah's mah receipt fo' th' same," saying which he attempted to put his hand to his hip pocket, but the manacles held him back.

He smiled at the predicament, and nodded pleasantly to one of the marines, who stepped up to him and drew from the depths of the capacious pocket a crumpled bit of paper, which he handed over to the Captain of the *Westport*, who read it over carefully.

"This is in proper form, Thompson, and shows that you delivered the refugees, but it does not explain why you are here, running without lights and without a pass."

"Why, Cap'n, th' officer whut tuk me pris'ner relieved me of mah pass."

"Is that your pass?" demanded the Captain, exhibiting the soiled card handed to the ensign the night before.

"Thet's hit, Cap'n, thet's hit pre-cisely."

"But this pass is good only as far as St. Mary's."

"Exactly; I was boun' fo' home when we smashed."

"You were pretty far out of your course for St. Mary's, Tom, and I have a great mind to turn you over to the provost. Whether guilty of trying to run the blockade or not, you *are* guilty of running without signals, and are out of your course for this pass, but as you have lost your boat and have heretofore borne such a good name along the river, I believe I will put you off at St. Mary's, with this warning, and I give it to you, Captain Tommy-Tommy, in a friendly spirit; if suspicion ever points your way again, it will go hard with you. I make it my religion to execute my orders to the best of my ability and understanding, but I fear I am stretching clemency a little too far in this case. However, we will say the nigger was at fault; that he failed to fill the lights and that he slept at his post. If you get another sloop, and I really would not advise you to do so, leave the nigger at home. You go back to Maryland and stay there till the war is over. Understand me?"

"I undahstan', Cap'n, an' if you'll jest heve these heah knuckle fasteners knocked off mah han's, I'll, I'll —" he was going to say, "shake hands with you," but, as the Captain turned from him at that moment, he ended with — "take er chaw of terbacker."

The *Westport* being then very close to St. Mary's, a boat was lowered and Captain Tommy-Tommy and his shadowy Jim were landed on the beach. He shook hands genially with the sailors before turning his back to them, and then the two struck off into

the woods. By midnight they had put a good distance between themselves and the vessel, and, under cover of darkness, stealthily uncovered a canoe concealed in a little bay, and escaped to the Virginia shore.

The next morning, as the Captain of the *Westport* was seated at breakfast, Ensign Ruppert, the officer who had boarded the wrecked *Eeler*, entered the cabin, apparently in a state of great excitement.

"Look at this, sir, look at this," he blurted out, saluting with one hand and with the other extending a small bunch of dirty tissue paper, protruding from what appeared to be a "trick" cigar.

The Captain, usually mild and gentle, turned red in the face. "What, sir, what do you mean by bringing that dirty piece of trash in here and putting it on my breakfast table! Have you gone crazy, Mr. Ruppert?" and in his rage he upset the glass standing by his plate.

Poor Ruppert, whose countenance as he entered the cabin was flushed and eager, startled and cowed by this so unusual outburst of anger, stammered, "Why, sir, pardon me, sir, I should have been more respectful, but I was excited. This thing was found on the floor of the wrecked sloop night before last. One of my men picked it up from the floor. You will see, sir, that while it is made in the form of a cigar, and is mostly tobacco, it encloses this fold of tissue paper, on which you will find a perfect and complete drawing of the sixty-eight forts and batteries around Washington from Fort Lyon to Fort De Kalb, with full descriptions, which you can easily make out with the aid of this magnifying glass."

The Captain turned quickly and picked up the false cigar, and a glance was sufficient to show him that it was the work of a master hand and information of much value to the enemy could they but secure it. "Found this on the sloop, you say? Who found it? Send him here."

Word was passed along for Jonson to come to the Captain's cabin, and he soon appeared, hat in hand, wringing his forelock as a sign of respect and obedience.

"Where did you get this, Jonson?" demanded the Captain, holding up the trophy for him to see.

"Why, sir, when we was ordered to the sloop night before last, sir, why, I was one of them as was selected to go along, and when

the Ensign ordered us below to look for anybody that might be a-hiding, I carried the light, and in looking around, me and Jack Grummage run over a lot of clothes laying on the floor, and as I kicked them over, that cigar fell outen the pocket of the weskit. I brought it aboard, sir, thinking to have a good smoke — when off duty, sir — as it looked like a furst-class A1 cigar, but when I tried to light it, sir, why it wouldn't stay light no more'n a minute. Thinks I, it's damp, and puts it aside to dry out, and then I tackles it again. But it wouldn't smoke, sir, and thinks I, I'll break it up for my pipe, but when I breaks it open out tumbles this bit of paper. When it fust fell out, it wasn't no more'n a thimbleful, but when I opens it up, curiosily, it spreads over my whole chest. I passes the joke around the fokesell, and the bosun sees, and he shows it to the Ensign there, and here it is. Some of the boys say, sir, as it's very important. If it is, sir, may I make so bold as to hope you will mention me in orders, sir?"

"Orders! orders! Mention you in orders! Why, damn you, be thankful that I don't put you in the 'brig' on bread and water for a month. Why didn't you bring this to me at once? Get out!"

Jonson's forelock slipped through his hand at the first exclamation from the Captain, whose deep attention to his lengthy recital of his story had encouraged the poor fellow to believe some of the nonsense that his mates had been stuffing him with, and he saw promotion coming to him with outstretched arms. All dreams disappeared at the furious outbreak of his commander, and he inhaled a deep breath of relief when he was permitted to leave his presence.

The Captain turned to Ruppert and gave orders for the ship to be put back to St. Mary's under all steam. "I'll catch that damned hypocritical scoundrel if I have to use every vessel in the fleet," he muttered, as he paced the floor of the cabin in deep anger.

"Oh, Captain, pardon me," exclaimed Ruppert, again coming to the door, and this time holding up the burgee of the wrecked sloop, "but look at this flag. Read it forwards, and then backwards."

The Captain read, "E–E–L–E–R, R–E–L–E–E," and ground his teeth in impotent rage. "And just to think," he roared, "that

thing has been running up and down this river ever since the war began, and no one ever saw it before. R. E. Lee! All right, Mr. R. E. Lee Eeeler, we have sunk you, and now for your skipper. Take me for a scuttle-butt if I don't get him hanged. That's why he wanted to pass in the dark. Well, he has passed his last time. And, Mr. Ruppert," the Captain's voice was now lowered to his natural well-modulated tones, but contained a ring of firmness and determination seldom heard except in moments of extreme necessity, "mark my words, if my own father is ever found on this river without a United States flag wrapped around him and a special permit from President Lincoln, I'll send him to the provost the same as a rebel caught with arms in hand. I am through with all clemency for our loyal Marylanders. They don't exist."

The *Westport* soon arrived off the mouth of the St. Mary's River, but a most thorough search of the town and neighboring country failed to reveal any trace of the fugitives. No one could be found who had seen Captain Thomas Tomlin Thompson or his negro Jim, both as well known as the old timbers of St. Mary's wharf. The quest ended in a failure, and the *Westport's* commander had to send in his report with his regrets for the escape of the two men, both of whom were fast making their way to Richmond; while the passenger who had left the *Eeler* in a cork jacket was gently floating out with the tide, his face upturned to the sky. His last mission had failed.

The White Death.*

BY DON MARK LEMON.

HE was an American. He had come to the country in search of gold. He should have remained on his estate at home in Virginia. But no, he must come to South America and prospect in Tarantula Valley. He proposed it first to his Mexican guide, Lozo. Lozo grew white about the lips, despite his tawny color, and shook his head.

"Why not?" the American questioned.

"The White Death, señor; it is there!"

"Where — in Tarantula Valley?"

"Yes, señor."

"What is the White Death?"

Lozo drew his lips firmly together and again shook his head. Evidently the White Death was something to be silent about, as well as to fear.

"Is it a pestilence of some kind?" the American questioned.

"No, señor."

"Is it a snake?"

"No, señor."

"A wild beast?"

"No, señor."

"Is it death from poisonous gases?"

"No, señor."

"Is it death by the hand of men — banditti, for instance?"

"No, señor."

"Hunger? thirst?"

"No, señor."

"Then what the devil is the White Death?"

The American spoke angrily, but Lozo made no reply. He only drew his lips tighter together and looked more frightened.

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The fellow — half savage that he was — feared he might draw the anger of the White Death upon himself should he describe its nature.

"Queer!" the American muttered, greatly perplexed. Then he tried policy. "Come, I'll double your pay if you'll act as guide."

"No, señor."

"Treble it."

"No, señor."

"Give you ten dollars a day — American gold."

"No, señor."

The American considered awhile. Then he said, "That decides me; I'll prospect Tarantula Valley and see if I can't stack a mortgage on this White Death — and I'll go it alone."

The Mexican was a Catholic. He crossed himself and looked unhappy. There was no reason he shouldn't look unhappy. He liked the American, in his rough way; besides the American's pay was good — and certain. And now the American was going to meet the White Death!

Having made up his mind to prospect Tarantula Valley at any cost, the Virginian looked about for another guide than Lozo, but his labor was wasted. No one would accompany him on his proposed prospecting tour, nor explain what was meant by the White Death.

Was it something so strange, so far removed from common nature, that human speech could frame no description of it? Or did the superstitious villagers fear that they might draw the anger of the White Death — whatever it was — upon themselves should they go into particulars?

The next day the American set out alone for Tarantula Valley, very curious and not at all nervous. He was well provisioned — one burro bore his supply of food, another his blankets and mining outfit — and well armed. He didn't reason that there might be something lurking in the Valley before him against which his Winchester would be no protection — some Shape such as might haunt the Infernal pool and make it more hideous than even a diseased poet could imagine. No; he didn't reason at all.

Tarantula Valley, in appearance, was a pleasant place, with a

wooded river flowing through it and a wooded lake, or large pool, in its centre. The American thought what a paradise it would be in which to dream away the rest of his life with One by his side who was waiting for him in Virginia.

Yet, despite the sylvan charm of the Valley, the American soon grew lonely, for there really wasn't much society about. To be sure, there were the two burros, an occasional snake, a few horned toads, and some buzzards; but, apart from these, the dumb creatures to be seen were not at all sociable. Not sociable, at least, like the buzzards. *They*, in one particular, were almost as good as human society, taking, as they did, a very evident interest in the American's state of health.

Then, too, there was a half-wild burro in the Valley. At least a half-wild burro passed through the vale one day and for a few minutes fell in with the pack animals of the American. Of course dumb beasts can't talk with one another, yet, somehow, after that half-wild burro had fooled awhile around the ears of the two tame burros, as a man fools around the ear of a friend to whom he is giving a tip, those two tame burros, in company with the half-wild one, made such quick tracks from Tarantula Valley that to the astonished American the animals seemed like three dirty streaks of light making for the hills ten miles beyond. Evidently the creatures were frightened at something — not at something they saw, but at something they feared they might see.

And what was still more curious, there wasn't an animal in Tarantula Valley that didn't appear half dead from fright. Actually the American came to the conclusion that the dumb habitants of the Valley were all so subdued by fear that they hadn't the sense left with which to migrate.

But, strangest of all — of which fact there could be no doubt, as the Virginian had the witness of his own eyes — were the collections of bones scattered over the Valley, and especially about the lake. On his first day in the vale he had lighted on one of these collections of bones. He examined it. It looked like a little open-air cosmopolitan graveyard. Within a circle about twenty feet in diameter was collected the skeleton of a burro, the skeleton of a buzzard, the skeleton of a large wild animal of the cat tribe, the skeleton of a cow, several skeletons the species of which the

American couldn't determine, and last, but not least, the skeleton of a man.

It was evident that some wild animal had lately ravened in that part of the country, gathering into one feeding ground the prey of a month or so.

The second day he spent in the Valley the American lighted on a second collection of bones. It was much like the first, only the human skeleton bleaching in the sun was that of a woman and not a man. At this the Virginian got very angry, though without especial reason. The woman, surely, couldn't have died any harder than the man.

The third day he lighted on a third collection of bones, and the skeleton of a man and woman lay side by side. With this he began to wonder seriously what manner of thing it was that had turned the Valley into a charnel. Was it a great panther of some kind — or a huge snake? Or — but no, it couldn't be a man. That was something too hideous to believe. And a man or band of men it was not.

Then he struck gold. He slipped into the river one morning, scraping the bank in his fall, and there in the river-bank he found the gold. It was placer and so rich that in less than a week he got enough to satisfy a woman, let alone a man. Then he laid off a day and went down the river in search of game, and, without especially looking for it, he found a fourth collection of bones which, from its condition, seemed to be the latest feeding ground of the Thing — the White Death.

Now, when a man has a cool million in sight — or thinks he has — he feels more secure from personal danger than when he has little or nothing, so the American decided to hang about that fourth collection of bones and try to bag something.

Straightway he found a suitable spot beside a rock, and, leaning his Winchester within easy reach, proceeded to watch. About thirty feet distant was a huge collection of boulders; perhaps hidden in the wide fissures of these boulders was the thing he sought.

For a half hour, or, rather, forty minutes, the American gave his whole attention to the business in hand, then, nothing appearing, he got tired and began to scratch his sweetheart's name in the

dirt at his feet. It was a pleasant thing to do, though, to be sure, rather foolish for a man on watch — for Something — he didn't know exactly what.

When he had finished writing Her name in the dust, then his own name, and then had traced around both a rude figure more like spades than the human heart, he looked up.

At first he thought there was something wrong with his eyes and he winked them several times. Then he thought his brains were tangled, and so he multiplied several figures mentally, but, getting the right answers, for four times four *is* sixteen, six times three *is* eighteen, and eight times seven *is* fifty-six, he concluded it was something else than his reason at fault. Then he reached out his hand for his Winchester, but desisted before touching the rifle, for he chose rather to watch the Thing squatted upon the pile of rock than handle an uninteresting weapon. But perhaps he had no choice in the matter — perhaps he couldn't do other than watch. The Thing was so very fascinating.

It was looking directly at him — the Thing on the rocks — and, though it made not the slightest noise to attract his attention, there was no reason he should not see it. For it was as big as an ox lying down. But it wasn't an ox. Neither was it anything like an ox.

It was a gigantic spider or tarantula, large as a full-grown tiger, with long white hair all over its huge and horrible body!

"Why," the American began. Evidently he was going to say, "Why, if I had known of such a thing as that around here, I would have stayed away." But he got no further than "Why," for it was more fascinating watching the Thing than talking or thinking.

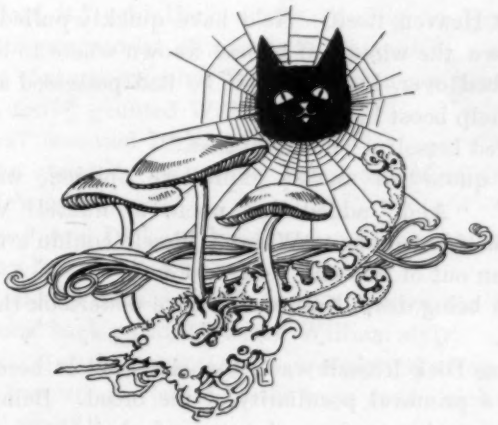
Then, again, the American tried to reach for his Winchester, but the light that came out of the eyes of the squat Thing upon the rocks paralyzed his arm. Or perhaps it was only surprise that deprived him of the power of motion, for he well knew that there is no such thing as hypnotic power in the eye of man or beast.

Then suddenly the long white hair of the Thing began to tremble and the American felt as if his whole body were blistering from some intense heat, and, as the eyes of the White Death stood out farther from its horrible head, and its great legs drew closer

together for the thirty-foot spring, the Virginian began to cry — to whimper — and a single word dropped from his maudlin lips. That word, puerile enough for a strong man, was "Mother!" The face of the American's mother had suddenly flashed before his soul somewhere in the back of his head. The face had the mouth of his sweetheart. He should have known, for he had kissed the mouth several times before leaving Virginia.

Then the squat Thing upon the rock began to tremble throughout and its long white hair to shiver and its legs to collect closer and closer. Whereupon the American began to laugh foolishly, like a baby, and beat and paddle his hands in the dust, and his body grew flaccid and flabby and his breast sank down into his stomach.

Then, like a flash of white light struck out of the rock, the squat Thing leapt thirty feet through the hot air, and, as it sunk its horrible fangs into the neck of the American, his lips were bowed down into his sweetheart's name in the dust, and he babbled, "'Now — I lay me down — to sleep.'"



The Freeze that Thawed Her.*

BY WALTER E. ANDREWS.

THEY were neighbors.

He was growing a peach orchard for a prospectively prosperous living. She was growing a prosperous living by managing an inherited peach orchard. He was young. She was younger. There similarity ceased. He was rugged, uncultured, plain, though with a certain charm of virile, forceful homeliness difficult to analyze. She was pretty, college bred, aristocratic. He believed in brawn and brain. She believed in blood and breeding.

They were not neighborly.

He tried to be. She didn't. He dared to look over the fence. She disdained to forage across the border. Only a common fence separated them (a cruel barb-wire thing), but Dick felt that this fence took root in the antipodes and then reached up until it barred out Heaven itself. He'd have quickly pulled the staples and let down the wires — if he had known where to begin. He'd have climbed over, long ago — if he had possessed a few golden eagles to help boost him.

She called herself a "horticulturist."

He, to quote his uncle's expressive opinion, was merely a "hustler." "And," added that uncle to himself with a sigh, half-sad, half-humorous, "Webster hisself couldn't make a compound noun out of two sich pesky words."

Webster being dead, Nature and Love undertook the task.

. . . . . .

Of course Dick Russell was a bachelor — most heroes in stories are. It's a primeval peculiarity of the breed. Being a bachelor, and (to quote his uncle again) "a soft-shelled one at that," he

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of $200 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending February 26, 1902.

needed a home. Being in love, he needed occasional tonic scoldings. Mr. and Mrs. Waddle bravely endeavored to supply both needs. (William Waddle is Dick's uncle; Mandy Waddle is William's supervisor, corrector and lawful yoke-mate.) For the sum of four dollars weekly this duteous couple boarded, mended, advised, scolded, and "washed and ironed" nephew Dick in hearty country style devoid of frills.

Dick's peach orchard, being sandwiched in between the Waddle homestead and the adored Helen Remington's twenty-acre farm stood (as William once said in conjugal confidence) "jest half way 'twixt Helen — paradise." It may be well to add, as a warning to other humorously inclined husbands, that the rash remark brought William no honor except a cuff on the ear and a demand to know "which farm he was a-callin' paradise?"

The orchard was Dick's by right of purchase, privation and persistence. For five years he had worked and struggled and hoped. The trees planted by his own hands were his pets, his companions, his all — for he was alone in the world.

"Why don't you stick up a house on your thirty-acre purgatory — 'xcuse me — peach farm?" asked William Waddle one night as he and Dick sat smoking a good-night pipe on the side porch.

"Can't afford it," said Dick curtly (failing to appreciate or understand the purgatorial allusion); "I'm putting every cent I can raise into that gas machine I'm building on my farm."

"Fool job, too!" grunted William.

"Mebbe so," assented Dick, grimly.

"No mebbe about it. Who ever heard tell of raisin' peaches with gas! It's agin nature."

"You'll see," said Dick, with a fierce puff at his corn-cob pipe and a far-away look in his blue eyes.

"Goin' to make a balloon that'll boost you over the fence into the Remingtons' back parlor?" asked William slyly.

No answer. But the fire in Dick's pipe glowed savagely hot.

"Goin' to put up gas lamps in the trees so the orchard'll be a sort o' lovers' park?"

"*Shut up!*"

"Cert'inly, cert'inly, of course. I were jest a-thinking so myself," remarked William hastily. Dick smiled grimly to himself

in the darkness, knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and, with a quiet "good-night," strode off to bed.

"Sho-o-o!" whistled William softly, as he settled his legs more comfortably on the porch railing. "That 'ere boy's as full o' grit as a hen's crop. He's —"

"Will-*yum!*" cried a commanding feminine voice from within the house; "you quit that 'ere moonin' and smokin', an' come to bed immejetly."

"Cert'inly, Mandy; of course. I were jest a-gittin' started afore you spoke."

The months passed. Autumn came, and with it Dick's first full crop of peaches. He felt like hugging the trees when the long-hoped-for stream of rosy-cheeked beauties came pouring into his packing shed. As he picked and packed and hauled the fruit to the boat dock, he whistled joyously at his work and dreamed of the young lady on the other side of the fence. He saw her bright eyes and peachy cheeks in every basketful of fruit; and, as the peach limbs bent low and groaned with their burden, his own limbs grew straight and strong with hope. It was "another good year" for peaches. All the neighbors made money. Miss Remington paid off a quarter of the mortgage on her farm, and planned a trip to Boston in the spring. "Peach belt" farmers were jubilant; five good crop years in succession! They talked of "favored localities" and "frost-proof orchards," and planned to set out more peach trees in April.

"Peach raisin' is a-gittin' to be a reg'lar cinch," declared William Waddle joyfully.

"Who says so?" sniffed Mrs. Waddle disdainfully.

"Ev'rybody."

"I don't b'lieve a word on't! Here I've been a-slavin' an' a-cookin' for you goin' on thirty years, an' not a sign of a sealskin sack yit. Nothin' but flour sacks. A real, genu-*wine* cinch would cert'inly git me a sack immejetly." Which logic was so irresistible that William gladly compromised on an "electric" seal.

Dick said little, but read a great deal. One day he horrified the Waddles by requesting permission to put in a telephone.

"What for?" demanded they in a breath.

"'Cause I want it," said Dick.

So, in spite of opposition and dire predictions about "lightnin' runnin' along the wires an' setting' the house afire," the telephone was installed, connecting the house with the distant village of Peachville. His point won, and his crop money safely deposited in the bank, Dick threw himself heart and soul into the completion of his queer gas plant. He bought miles of slender iron piping, and many tons of hard coal. He dug ditches and laid a portion of the piping around his orchard and at regular distances across it, until the ground looked like a gigantic gridiron. The unused piping (by far the larger portion) was stored away in the gas house. When the work was finished and the ditches filled in, curious neighbors commented on the "queer nozzles" which showed above the ground at intervals along the straight rows of buried pipes.

"Goin' to irrigate?" they asked.

"Mebbe," said Dick, grimly.

"How're you goin' to plow an' harrow with them things a-stickin' up in that way?"

"Same as if they were peach trees — keep away from 'em."

The gas machine itself, situated in the centre of the orchard, was, by aid of a stout building, stout shutters and a portly padlock, made curiosity proof. No one went into this building except Dick and two trusted workmen.

. . . . . .

"It's perfectly scand'lous!" sniffed Mrs. Waddle one bitterly cold February evening as she sat by the kitchen fire mending a pair of Dick's socks.

"Which?" asked William, looking up from his newspaper absent-mindedly.

"Dick's goin's-on."

"Where's he goin' now?" he asked, his mind still on the paper.

"Will-*yum!*"

"Cert'inly. Here I be. Of course" (laying down the paper).

"Don't you know," she demanded, looking at him severely, "that Dick is a-spendin' ev'ry cent he's got in the world for a big black machine an' a lot o' rusty gastric pipes? An' you a-sittin' on the fence, an' a-watchin' him make a fool of hisself. An' never sayin' a word. An' you his only-begotten uncle!"

William looked crushed. Then, rallying, he muttered meekly, "I ain't sat on no fence for ten years."

"William Waddle, you're a-sitting on one this blessed minute!"

He glanced furtively and dubiously at his chair, then at her. "Jest as you say, Mandy. Cert'inly, cert'inly."

"Listen!" she said suddenly, holding up one of Dick's socks warningly. Borne on the crisp night air there came the distant ringing blows of hammer upon steel. *Tap-tap, tapity-tap!* William shuffled his feet uneasily, while his wife looked at him triumphantly. The clock struck ten. Outdoors the atmosphere was strangely still. The cold seemed to creep through the walls, causing solid timbers to creak and groan uncannily as if in pain. William shivered, poked up the fire, and stepped to the window. "My! Ain't it a-gittin' cold," he said as he scraped a peep-hole in the frosted pane.

"Five b'low zero," he continued, holding the lamp so that its rays shone upon the thermometer outside.

"Won't it hurt the peaches?" asked Mrs. Waddle, suddenly dropping the thread of her sermon.

"Nope. You needn't be afeard; peaches don't git hurt in this here peach belt nowadays. Why, that 'ere thermom'ter ain't been down lower'n ten b'low for over twenty years; an' it takes twelve or better to knock out peach buds at this time o' year."

Just then, when Mrs. Waddle had her mouth wide open to reply, the telephone bell rang loudly. The sudden sound went straight down her throat and seemed to freeze the outcoming words into rigid, surprised silence.

"*Jumpin' Gosh!*" exclaimed William, almost dropping the lamp. Stepping to the instrument he put the receiver to his ear —gingerly— and demanded in a shaking voice "What in Sam-Hill folks meant by a-ringin' honest people out of their bed at sich a time o' night?"

"Is Dick Russell there?" asked an unfamiliar voice.

"Nope; he ain't. He's over to work on his gas engine."

"Will you take a message to him at once?"

"Mebbe. Who're you?"

"Never mind me. Here's the message — it's important. Tell Russell that the Washington fellows wire, '*Bottom going to fall*

out of cellar steps.' Don't forget, now! Good-bye." William gasped and turned to his wife just in time to see her throat melt into speech again.

"What's it all about?" she sputtered, as if the words still icily nipped her tongue.

"'Bottom goin' to fall out of cellar steps,'" repeated he, rubbing his eyes to see if he was dreaming.

"*What!*" cried she, jumping for him and giving him a shake which almost unjointed his suspenders; "what kind o' nonsense is that you're a-talkin' to me?"

"That's what the feller *said*," persisted he humbly, as he hastened to explain matters.

"He's crazy," snapped Mrs. Waddle.

"Mebbe so. Mebbe. Folks say Dick's crazy, too. Mebbe we're all crazy — 'ceptin' you an' the heifer calf." And William solemnly reached for his boots, kicked off his slippers, and thrust his red socks into cold leather. "What you goin' to do?" demanded she as he grabbed his overcoat, jammed an old fur cap down over his ears, lit the lantern, and pulled on a pair of ragged mittens.

"Do? Why, git *off* that 'ere fence immejetly, an' cart that message over to Dick afore it gits froze."

"You're a bigger fool nor Dick," snapped his wife, disgustedly.

A tramp of about forty rods through the squeaking snow brought William to the "gassy madhouse" (as Dick's neighbors politely called the structure).

"Hello!" cried the messenger, pounding on the door and panting puffs of foggy vapor into the biting air. The stars shone with a strange scintillating intensity — an almost threatening steely fierceness — that struck a chill of unaccountable terror straight down into William Waddle's heart.

"Hello — hello!"

"Who's that?" asked Dick's voice from within.

"Me — Uncle Bill."

"What's up?" inquired Dick, opening the door a trifle.

"'Tain't up; it's a-comin' down. '*Bottom's a-goin' to fall out of the cellar steps.*' George Washington says so. An' I'm a-freezin' out here."

Dick swung the door wide open. "Come in," said he.

For the first time in his life Mr. Waddle stood within the building which had piqued the curiosity of the entire neighborhood. He found himself in a high, well-lighted room filled with iron boilers, coils of black piping and piles of coal and coke. In another room he caught a glimpse of a huge round, uncanny-looking metal vat which seemed to reach to the roof. A gassy smell pervaded the air. Two strange men, with grimy faces and smeary blouses, were at work in a far corner of the first room. William blinked at the lights, sniffed at the dirty atmosphere and gasped in bewilderment at his nephew. Dick offered a rickety chair and said, with an inscrutable smile, "So the bottom's going to drop out, is it?"

"That's what a darned telephone idget told me to tell you."

"Much obliged," said Dick. "Did you notice what the thermometer said when you left home?"

"You're a bigger fool nor Dick," replied William, quoting literally.

"No — no! I mean the weather thermometer."

"Oh!" muttered William, looking foolish. "*It* said, five b'low zero."

Picking up the lantern Dick hurried outside the door and consulted his own thermometer. "Six below, now," said he thoughtfully, shutting the door and stamping the snow from off his feet. Then, hastily giving some instructions to the workmen, he put on his coat and hat, took up the lantern again and turned to William.

"Uncle Bill," said he earnestly, "I've been working and waiting a long time for this night. It may mean a small fortune for us all, and" — here his voice sank to a lower tone — "it may perhaps mean to me something more precious than a dozen fortunes. . . . And I need your help. . . . Sit still and get warm till I come back."

"What'll Mandy say if I don't git home immejetly?" stammered William, visions of worse than zero greetings flitting across his mind. And yet — deep down in his gnarly old heart, too deep for even Mandy's fiery probe to reach — there glowed a warm spot for —

But Dick had gone.

Where?

Straight to Helen Remington. That is, as straight as a detour

around the fence would permit. As he marched up the walk to the house (wherein he had never been but once in his life) he swung his uncle's lantern and stamped his feet to keep up his courage. What would she think of him for daring to call at such a late hour? . . . For daring to call at all? . . . For even daring to think of calling? In spite of the intense cold, tiny beads of perspiration came out on his forehead and then congealed swiftly into needle points of despair. To his relief he saw a light in the sitting-room. This aristocratic young lady, it seemed, kept aristocratic hours. He knocked on the door softly. His heart pounded fiercely. "Who is there?" asked a puzzled, half-frightened feminine voice, through the door. At the sound — it was *her* voice — his courage and determination came back with a rush. The night was his. The chance had come!

"It's only Dick Russell," he said quietly. "There's an important matter I must see you about." Then she opened the door — haughtily, fearlessly. The lantern light, like a halo, shone upon her. Humbly removing his hat, Dick stepped over the threshold of paradise.

"Come into the sitting-room, Mr. Russell," said the girl frigidly. (My! but the mercury was going down fast.)

Dick shivered, in spite of his opportunity and his big overcoat. She noticed the shiver, and also the tense, drawn look on his rugged face. Her face softened a little — a very little. (The mercury stood still.)

"You are cold," she said, simply, pulling a chair toward the fire for him. ("She could do no less for a stray dog," thought Dick to himself with another shiver.) But he took the warm seat gratefully, and said, "There's a big freeze coming to-night."

"Yes?" (without the faintest trace of interest).

"Probably the biggest in years," he continued, blunderingly.

"How do you know?"

"I've just had news from the weather bureau; and I've come to warn you and to — to save your orchard."

"Have you warned the other neighbors?" she asked, quietly.

"No–o. That is, I — I — "

"Why haven't you?"

"Because I — well — bother it all!" he stammered, suddenly

getting warm all over, — "because I thought of you first. And I only got the news a few minutes ago. And I couldn't, if I wanted to, save *all* the orchards around here. But I *can* save yours — and my own — and Uncle Bill's."

"How?"

"With the gas plant I've been building, and — and —" He hesitated, stopped. A strange expression — half fear, half pity — had crept into her eyes. "Never mind the details, Mr. Russell," she said hurriedly as she arose to her feet; "it is late, and there is your own orchard to think of. Mine must take its chances as it always has done. I thank you —"

"But —" interrupted Dick as he stood up and faced her. (How daintily warm she looked, yet how icily white and cold! The lace at her throat seemed like a snow-wreath encircling the pale glow of the tropics; her brown eyes burned with the soft but icy fire of a polar aurora.) "But —" he began again, "I — I —" Then a sudden comprehension swept through him; he understood her strange expression. The words he would have said died upon his lips. With a startled, indignant, awful look — that look which only comes to human eyes when death strikes in the guise of friendship — this sorely stricken lover proudly threw back his head and big shoulders — and marched out of paradise.

And he marched down the front walk without once looking back. He held himself very straight and stiff; and yet, when the gate closed behind him — but no one saw, no one heeded. Poor Dick. His chance had come — and gone.

Miss Remington, left alone, took up a book and tried to read. But she could not. Those startled, indignant eyes seemed still to confront her. That plain but manly face seemed still to shrink into deathly whiteness before her presence. She saw, over and over again, that terrible metamorphosis of hope into horror.

And he had come to help her! He had thought of her first. . . . What if she had made a mistake? Could real insanity be co-existent with such sane indignation?

The clock struck eleven. The room, despite the blazing fire, seemed strangely cold. With a sudden shiver she flung the book down and drew her chair closer to the fire. Hark! — *what was that?* The night was still, but the house seemed to groan with

queer crackling sounds. Outside she heard distant voices and the squeaking creak of a passing bob-sleigh.

"There must be an unusually hard freeze to-night," she thought. Then, with a quick start, she remembered that *he* had predicted it. With an odd feeling of distress and uncertainty she sprang to her feet and, hastily wrapping a shawl around her head, went out on the front porch to look at the thermometer. The light from a window shone on it. She looked; started back; then looked again.

Eight degrees below zero!

She began to feel afraid; she had heard of the damage wrought to peach orchards by cold only a trifle more intense than this. The stars shot frosty flashes of defiance at her; the icy air gripped her throat and clutched at her bare hands. Ah! how bitter cold! As she hesitated, strange lights commenced to glow on the adjoining farm. She stood spellbound. The lights multiplied and grew before her eyes as in a scene from fairyland. Then the cold gripped her cruelly and, with a gasp of physical pain, she crept indoors and shiveringly bent over the fire.

Snap — creak — snap! faintly moaned the frost spirits imprisoned in the house walls. The cat came whining to Helen's feet, as if afraid. The fire roared and spit viciously.

Real fear tugged at her heart. She felt cruelly alone. Should she awaken her aunt? Or the servant? Then she remembered, with another pang of fear, that the hired man had gone to a neighboring village to spend the night. Stepping to a window she breathed on the frosted pane; the Ice King, intoxicated by her warm breath, relaxed his hold on the pane and melted into visible geniality. Looking out, in the direction of Dick Russell's farm, she saw that his orchard was encompassed and crossed by systematic rows of yellow light-jets, blazing and smoking uncannily in the still air!

Then the truth came home to her.

He was not insane. He was merely a genius. He was right; she was wrong. He had come to her in manly helpfulness, and she had —

The tears came to her eyes. But not for long. Hurrying to the hall she put on her overshoes and warm outdoor wraps, and

stepped out on the porch. A hasty glance at the mercury — *nine below*, and the night not yet half gone! She sped down the walk and then toward Dick's farm. No need of a lantern; the murky glow of those many lights made the way plain. She did not hesitate; she was not afraid; conventionalities were forgotten. But one thought possessed her — to find Mr. Russell and ask his forgiveness. The rest did not matter.

She found him, as fate would have it — alone. He was hard at work, wrench in one hand, lighted torch in the other, unscrewing black valves upreared above the snow, and then igniting into life uprushing jets of fire. In other parts of the orchard three men were similarly employed.

Hearing footsteps, Dick raised his head and faced a vision in a furry cloak — an angel with panting breast, glowing eyes and a breath-born frosty halo around its bewitching head.

"*Helen!*"

They looked into each other's eyes — hesitating, incredulous, mute. The lights glowed, the air felt warmer; the stars snapped steely sparks, like demons balked of their prey. The peach trees, grateful for human companionship and help, stretched forth their sheltering limbs to shield this bit of arctic Eden from the outside world. The snow glistened and sparkled like wedding crystal. Distant voices could be heard, as if from another existence.

Words came at last. "I misjudged you," she said simply, humbly. That was all.

For reply Dick dropped the wrench, flung off one mitten, and extended a smoky, bare hand — (which, to tell the truth, looked more forgiving than inviting). But Helen slipped a grateful hand into the offered (though grimy) clemency; and, when the clemency so far forgot itself as to boldly squeeze the imprisoned petitioner, she did not complain. She only blushed. Whereupon Dick, being a man of action rather than words, omitted to say several nice, pleasant things that an exemplary hero in an exemplary story would most certainly have said.

No; he merely let go of her hand. Reluctantly, but actually. Then, instead of kneeling at her feet and incidentally freezing his knee-caps, or instead of escorting her home in knightly style and so losing much valuable time, he merely said, "Your coming has

helped me greatly; but there is much to do. You will catch cold here. . . . Good-night" — his voice sank to a softer, almost caressing tone — "*good-night!*"

Snatching up the fallen wrench and waving it encouragingly at the girl, away he went at a keen run. For a second she stood and watched his lithe, powerful figure; then she saw — like a greasy spot on a white tablecloth — Dick's discarded mitten lying on the snow at her feet. She started — smiled. Then, growing suddenly ashamed and afraid, she turned and fled.

That night Dick "did things," manly things, rapid, clever things. He hurried William Waddle and the two men, William Waddle hurried two horses, and the two horses hurried load after load of spare iron piping to various places in Miss Remington's orchard. But first, with great joy (and a file), Dick cut a wide opening in the fence that "reached down to the antipodes and barred out heaven." Under his vigorous strokes the wires parted with a vicious, reluctant snap, and the victorious besieger passed through into the promised land.

Quickly and deftly the men began coupling the lengths of pipe together; while Dick, with one hand almost frozen, went back to find his lost mitten. Finding it, the pipe-laying progressed with greater rapidity. Soon the Remington orchard was encompassed and crossed with lines of black tubing laid upon the snow-crust, each pipe-length pierced in the centre with a tiny drilled hole. The line complete, Dick sent a man to open a valve at the fence juncture, while he and other men, torch in hand, ran along the line and ignited the gas at each opening.

Ten degrees below zero!

The tired men next turned their attention to the ten-acre Waddle orchard, and that too was soon protected by a picket guard of blazing gas.

Nine below!

Wearied and cold the men staggered to the gas-house and sank exhausted on the floor. After a short rest Dick consulted the thermometer again.

Five below!

"I've done it!" he gasped, triumphantly.

"So've I," muttered William, as a feminine figure appeared in

the doorway and a feminine voice (sharp and chill as the air outside) demanded to know —

Oh, well, William can tell you the rest.

. . . . . .

The subsequent events of that night are still fresh in the minds of Michigan peach growers. The "great freeze of '99" — the most destructive in a quarter of a century — has descended into history. In the morning hours of that fateful night the temperature (except in Dick's protected orchards, where ten was the lowest point registered) fell, slowly but surely, until it reached twenty and — in some places — twenty-five degrees below zero. A majority of the "peach belt" farmers slumbered on, unconscious of danger, waking in the morning to find destitution peering at them out of the icy air. Peach buds were ruined; and in many instances, the trees as well. The money loss crept up into the millions.

As weeks and months went by, the wisdom of Dick's "fool idea" became more and more manifest; and, when crop time came, the only orchards which bore peach crops in that township were "Purgatory," "Hell," and "Paradise" — as the neighbors slyly called the three farms, for William's early joke had somehow leaked into the public ear. And in that year of scarcity a peach crop was almost as good as a small gold-mine. Dick's bank account grew prodigiously. The last remnant of Miss Remington's mortgage disappeared. Mrs. Waddle's sealskin sack materialized into glossy, furry reality.

The breach in the fence barrier, once open, slowly widened; the sundered wires, once parted, refused to reunite. The way into paradise remained open. And Dick, as time went by, wore a short-cut path from "purgatory to heaven." One night (Ah! the world is studded with such nights, like stars in the dark sky) he asked a question — that question which has re-echoed in the universe since time began — and Miss Remington, blushing, archly said:

"Yes, Dick; but we needn't live in — in purgatory, need we? There isn't a house there, you know; and there *is* one — here."

Hot Weather Food.

Food for hot weather is an important question. People can feel from ten to twenty degrees cooler than their neighbors, by avoiding fats, cutting down the butter ration and indulging more freely in fruits and food easy of digestion.

An ideal meal is Grape-Nuts with cream, some fruit, a couple of slices of whole wheat bread, and a cup of Postum Food Coffee, hot, or if cold a little lemon juice squeezed in; Grape-Nuts can be made the principal food of the meal, because it is a concentrated food, one pound having as much nourishment — that the system will absorb — as ten pounds of beef, in addition to which it is already cooked and ready to serve. Delicious hot weather entrees and desserts are easily made.

Try this entree: — (*Salmon Croquettes with Grape-Nuts.*) Drain a can of salmon and mash the fish fine; add two beaten eggs, four tablespoonfuls of melted butter, one cup of bread-crumbs, one-half cup of finely ground Grape-Nuts, six tablespoonfuls of milk; salt, cayenne pepper and a pinch of mace. Beat to a paste. Lay small spoonfuls first into beaten egg, then in cracker dust, and shape into croquettes. Fry a delicate brown in deep fat and serve with mayonnaise dressing.

A dessert for a warm day: — (*Fruited Grape-Nuts.*) Chop together enough pineapple, bananas and peaches to make one cupful. In a dainty dish place a layer of this chopped fruit; then one of Grape-Nuts and repeat. Over all turn a cupful of whipped cream, let stand on ice ten minutes and serve.

A booklet of excellent recipes is found in every package of Grape-Nuts and many easy warm weather dishes can be made that are not only nutritious, but pleasing to the palate.

A person can pass through weather that may be intensely hot, in a comfortable manner, if the food be properly selected and the above suggestions can be put into practice with most excellent results.

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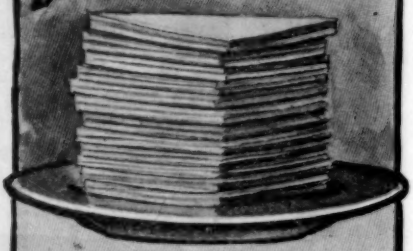

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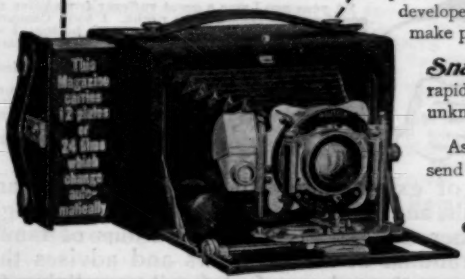

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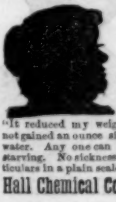

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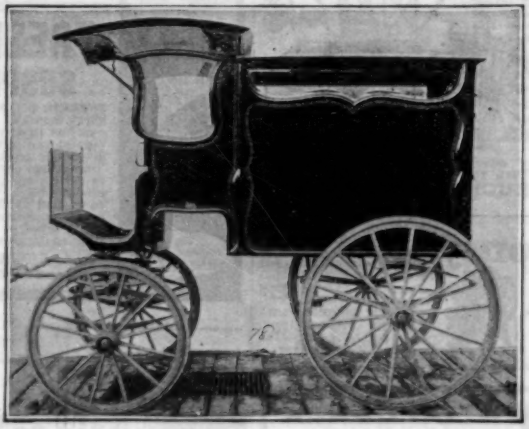

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